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After the Board's Decision

After the Board's Decision, recorded on 04/30/08, which reversed the Examiner's Action on all grounds of rejection, the Examiner issues the following decision.

Further, the Examiner herein enters the Applicant's 1.312 amendments, filed on 11/19/08, which update paragraph [0004] of the specification and the abstract of the claimed invention, while canceling claims 16-38 and 41-44 since the amendments do not change the scope of the specification and the claimed invention per se.

Claim Status

Claims 1, 4-15 and 39-40 are currently pending in the Application following the Applicant's 1.312 amendments.

Reason For Allowance

In general, the Board agrees with the Applicant's remarks and submits that the prior art combination, namely Quinlan, Lemon and Van Dusen, fails to teach "transmitting, by the rebate server computer system via the network, the purchase identifier to the store computer system" as featured in independent claim 1. Thus, claims 1, 4-15 and 39-40 are said to be allowable based on the Board's Decision.

In general,

Quinlan discloses a system and method for processing product marketing rebate claims submitted by a consumer in satisfaction of a rebate offer, the consumer having purchased designated or required products in a qualified transaction recorded by a participating point-of-sale (POS) data processing and storage system that issues a receipt containing a corresponding transaction serial number or identifier (linking a purchase identifier to a purchase of a product).

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The method further comprises the steps of providing a designated site of a computer information network accessible by the consumer for placing a rebate claim and receiving the rebate claim on the designated site. The rebate claim includes receiving the transaction serial number corresponding to the qualified transaction (linking a purchase identifier to a product purchase related to the rebate claim), and (ii) identifying or verifying information corresponding to the consumer (validation or authentication process). The transaction serial number and the identifying information are stored as permanent data records. Moreover, an electronic file transfer is received from the point-of-sale data processing and storage system comprising purchase data records, each record comprising the list of products purchased and the transaction serial number for a qualified transaction in which at least one designated product was purchased (Receiving the purchase identifier from a store computer). Each stored data record is associated with a purchase data record having an identical serial number and the records are processed to validate the rebate claim (validating, authenticating or verifying step). The value of the rebate offer is transferred to the consumer. Consumer access to the designated site may be via the global computer information network (Internet) or by telephone. The providing of the rebate to the consumer, subsequent to a rebate claim, may also optionally integrate paper-based and smart/credit/debit-card-based rebate claims (See abstract).

Van Dusen discloses an electronic gift certificate system, which distributes electronic gift certificates in the form of e-mail documents that include hyperlinks for automating the redemption process. When a gift certificate recipient selects such a hyperlink, inserted into the e-mail containing the gift certificate information including a claim code and sent by a gift

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purchaser to the recipient, the recipient's computer automatically transmits during a redemption process the claim code (purchase identifier or transaction serial number), generated by a server and extracted from a pool of claim code combinations, to the merchant's Web site, and the site responds by automatically crediting the recipient's personal account with the gift certificate amount. When the recipient subsequently makes a purchase from the merchant's Web site, the recipient's account balance is automatically applied to the purchase price.

Further, FIG. 5 illustrates a sequence of steps that are performed by the GC application 72 to process an order for an e-mail-based gift certificate. This process is executed after the purchaser's credit card number or other payment information has been verified. **As depicted by steps 90 and 92, the GC application 72, running on the server, initially generates a claim code that uniquely identifies the gift certificate, and then stores the claim code and the associated gift certificate information in the table 80, where the stored claim code is retrieved from and used to verify or authenticate a claim code submitted by a gift certificate recipient during a redemption process.** Various alternatives to using a claim code and a look-up table are possible. For example, the claim code could be replaced with an encrypted user ID of the recipient and an encrypted code, which represents the gift certificate amount (col. 6: 7-19).

Lemon discloses a system having remotely located coupon printing stations installed in stores and capable of limiting the number of coupons printed in a given time period. Each coupon station has a display for indicating the available coupons, selection means to allow a

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consumer to choose the desired coupon and a coupon printer coupled to a station for printing the selected coupon. The system disables display of a particular coupon when a pre-selected coupon limit has been reached (col. 2: 16-19; col. 3: 39-54; col. 4: 47-51).

Amy Doane, in “The Shopper’s Wallet-More And More Retailers Are Using Rewards Clubs To Keep Customers, Generate Market Research”, describes a system for providing rewards to club members.

Conclusion

Any inquiry concerning this communication from the Examiner should be directed to Jean D. Janvier, whose telephone number is (571) 272-6719. The aforementioned can normally be reached Monday-Thursday from 10:00AM to 6:00 PM EST. If attempts to reach the Examiner by telephone are unsuccessful, the Examiner’s Supervisor, Mr. James W. Myhre, can be reached at (571) 272- 6722.

Non-Official- 571-273-6719.

Official Draft : 571-273-8300

Re. 08/27/08

12/22/08

/J. J./

/Jean Janvier/

Primary Examiner, Art Unit 3688